REMARKS

Claims 13-37 are pending.

Applicant, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.607 and MPEP §2307, hereby requests interference with U.S. Patent 6,490,836, issued December 10, 2002. A copy of the '836 patent is attached. Applicant proposes, as the sole count, the following:

Count 1

The method of assembling a floor covering comprising cooperating rectangular hard floor panels each having a substantially planar underside and at least two opposed side edges including complementary coupling parts arranged to cooperate with identical complementary coupling parts of another one of said panels, said complementary coupling parts substantially comprising a tongue and a groove extending generally parallel to said underside, said coupling parts further including integrated mechanical locking elements which prevent the drifting apart of coupled ones of said panels away from each other in directions perpendicular to the respective coupled side edges and parallel to the undersides of the panels, said coupling parts defining at least in part a lower lip which defines at least a portion of a lower side of each groove of the coupling parts and an upper lip located above each groove area adjacent the upper surface of the panel; said lower lip extending distally beyond the upper lip; said locking elements including a portion of said lower lip which slopes downwardly in a direction extending from a distally outer location towards a proximally inner location, said portion located at least in part on a part of the lower lip extending beyond said upper lip, a lower side of said tongue that is inclined downwardly in a direction extending from proximal inner location of said tongue to a distally outer location thereof; said portion of said lower lip that slopes downwardly cooperating with said lower side of the tongue that is inclined, said lower lip including an elastically bendable portion that must be elastically bend downwardly to enable coupling of a complementary pair of tongue and groove coupling parts; comprising the steps of:

laying a first one of said panels on a support surface;

coupling a second one of said panels to said first one panel along first and second complementary side edges of the panels by fitting a tongue of one panel into a complementary

groove of the other panel until said downwardly sloping portion of said lower lip engages said downwardly inclined lower side of said tongue while bending the lower lip elastically in a downward direction; and

maintaining said lower lip in a bent condition after such coupling to effectively bias the sloped and inclined portions of the lower lip and tongue together and to produce a resultant biasing force maintaining the panels compressed against each other at the coupled side edges.

* * * * *

Applicant identifies claim 3 of the '836 patent as corresponding to the proposed count and applicant further identifies claim 15 of the instant application as corresponding to the proposed count. Claim 15 corresponds exactly to the proposed count.

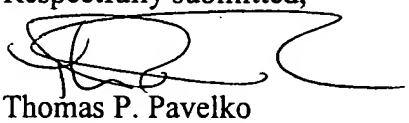
It is noted that applicant claims the benefit, *inter alia*, of an application which is a 371 of PCT/SE96/00256. A copy of the PCT/SE96/00256 application, as published as International Publication No. WO96/27721, is also enclosed. Drawing figures 2 and 3 of the instant application are substantially identical to drawing figures 2 and 3 of the aforementioned PCT application. It can be seen from the drawings, especially Fig. 3, that the floor boards 1 have tongue and groove configurations on their edges, which tongue and groove are also provided with coupling parts 9 and 10, which coupling parts have inclined surfaces 18 (and unnumbered in coupling part 9). The third full paragraph on page 4 of the PCT application, together with the first paragraph on page 5, shows that the coupling parts form a snap-together joint and that the connecting parts, when assembled by the snap-together joints, are fixed to each other and prevented from unintentional separation (PCT Application, page 4, last paragraph). Panel 1 may consist of a base of wood particles impregnated with a thermoplastic with a decorative thermosetting laminate as a surface layer glued on top of the base (PCT Application, page 4, paragraph 1). As disclosed in the PCT application, page 3, 3rd full paragraph, when the panels are assembled, there is no gap between the panels, such that water and dirt are prevented from entering the assembled flooring. It is noted that the PCT application claimed the benefit of Swedish priority application 9500810-8, the priority document which was provided during the international stage. Applicants also attach a verified English translation of the Swedish patent

application, which contains disclosure mirroring that of the PCT, e.g., See, for example, page 1, 1st three paragraphs, page 2, paragraphs 1-3, 5, page 3, 2nd and last paragraphs, page 4, 4th - 7th paragraphs, the original claims and the drawings.

Applicant respectfully requests that he be given benefit of his claimed priority under 35 USC §120 back to an including his PCT and benefit under 35 USC §119 and §365(b) for his Swedish priority document and that he be declared Senior Party in an interference with the '836 patent.

As this application is being filed within one year of the date of issue of the '836 patent, no statement under 35 U.S.C. §135(b) is necessary.

Respectfully submitted,



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